ORIGIN/ACTION

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1965 JAN 8 AM 8 59

TO : Department of State

INFO: Amman, Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, Jidda, London, Paris

ANALYSIS & DISTRIBUTION BRANCH

FROM : Amembassy Beirut

DATE: January 6, 1965

SUBJECT : French-Arab Relations

REF : CA-8895, March 4, 1964

file 1/12/65 NE/E

SUMMARY

The Beirut press reports that French initiatives in the Arab world are on the increase, with pro-UAR papers being particularly kind to the French. Tangible results, however, are not as evident.

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Beirut press reports of French efforts to improve relations with the Arab countries and bring about an increase in political, economic and cultural cooperation have become more frequent in the past few weeks. Although the press concentrated mainly on the visit of Jordan's King Hussein to Paris and the news of President Helou's forthcoming trip to Paris, other reports have been frequent. They included news coverage on a proposed French-Lebanese agreement for the observation of French space vehicles from Lebanese territory (November 18), French discussions on the possibility of participating in various Arab petroleum and irrigation projects (November 27), the arrival in Beirut of a French economic mission (December 28), and the possibility of a French loan to Syria and a French offer to build an airport for Damascus (December 28).

Over the weekend of January 1 the press gave wide coverage to a report that the French had agreed to offer 90,000 tons of wheat to the UAR, and pro-UAR al-Hawadith reported that France had offered to supply the Lebanese army with LL 7 million worth of arms and aircraft.

GROUP 3
Downgraded at 12-year intervals,
Not automatically declassified.

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Drafted by: POL:RDEmmons:mas 1/6/65

Contents and Classification Approved by: Mr. Mak.

Clearances:

Beirut's French weekly Le Commerce du Liban noted in a December 16 article that exchanges of visits between France and the Arab countries had been increasing, and cited King Hussein's recent visit to Paris and President Helou's future visit, de Gaulle's reception of Syria's Lt. General Amin al-Hafez, Mr. Antoine Pinay's recent visit to several Arab countries, and the probability, reported as well by several other Beirut papers, that de Gaulle himself would tour the Middle East next summer. Le Commerce du Liban noted that Pinay's delegation to Saudi Arabia and other countries, representing the "Société Française pour la Diffusion des Techniques", had discussed better Franco-Egyptian relations in the UAR and had "affirmed the existence of huge possibilities for French-Arab collaboration." The magazine said the French were either involved or interested in such projects as the Euphrates Dam and a center for training technicians in Syria, a butane gas project and a study on the creation of a petrochemical industry in Iraq, and the exploitation of subterranean water in Saudi Arabia.

The official visit of former French Premier Edgard FAURE to the UAR was also reported in the local press. Faure, in the UAR on the invitation of the Arab Socialist Union, told Cairo's al-Ahram that he had opposed the "Suez Canal adventure" and that he thought the time had come to remove "all traces of the incident, which had affected the historic ties that bound France and the UAR." Faure affirmed the desire of "many officials in France" for better relations with the UAR and said he felt any problems that existed between the two nations had disappeared. He praised the UAR's economic system, saying he had always felt there was a "just course" between a free economy and a socialist economic system and adding that the UAR had "applied a sound socialist policy which did not rely on hard and fast theory."

The pro-UAR press has warmed to the prospect of better French-Arab relations to a greater extent than Beirut's other papers. On the same day (January 5) that conservative as-Safa said de Gaulle's chances to offer the Arabs an alternative "were limited, because he can only play the role assigned to him by Washington", pro-UAR Beirut al-Masa hailed de Gaulle as an outstanding leader who had "liberated his country from US guardianship" and welcomed him to the Arab World. Pro-UAR Sawt al-Uruba referred to the Algerian settlement as a turning point in French-Arab relations and urged Cairo and the other Arab capitals to "meet the extended hand of General de Gaulle." Pro-UAR al-Anwar and al-Hawadith joined the call for stronger relations with France. Pro-UAR, leftist ash-Shaab, commenting earlier on King Hussein's Paris visit, hoped that de Gaulle would emulate his actions in Algeria by "bringing the mission of the French Revolution to Palestine." As-Safa, although it had lost some of its enthusiasm by January, agreed earlier with the Nasserist press that Hussein's Paris visit might not only benefit the Palestine question but herald a new Arab orientation toward a "French Europe."

Comment: The Department's CA-8895 requested reports on the trend of French relations with Lebanon and other addressees. While the increase in

French initiatives in the Arab world (as reported by the Beirut press) probably does not signal a dramatic increase in actual French diplomatic and economic involvement in the Middle East, it does tend to confirm that France is trying to improve its relations with the Arab countries. The lack thus far of tangible results, coupled with continuing Arab resentment of France's close relationship with Israel, indicate that the French "program" has a long way to go. The traditional preoccupation of the Lebanese with all things French should also be kept in mind.

For the Ambassador:

Dayton S. Mak

Dayton S. Mak
First Secretary of Embassy

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